



The Fifth Element

Expanding the Quadratic Nexus?

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Abstract

This paper suggests that there is yet another 'relational field' in the quadratic nexus, previously overlooked by nationalism studies, namely the complicated interplay *between* different national minorities sharing the same homeland along with the core nation. This paper argues that this 'fifth element' is vital for the comprehensive analysis of interethnic relations in cases where more than one sizeable ethnic minority is present in the same state. Using the example of interwar Latvia, it demonstrates that it has a direct impact on minorities' relations with the eponymous nation, with their respective kin-states, with international organisations, and on the overall state of majority–minority relations.

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1. Introduction

Rogers Brubaker's (1995, 1996) theoretical framework of the 'triadic nexus' linking nationalising states, national minorities and their 'external national homelands' successfully challenged the prevailing dyadic approach to the study of national conflict, which had traditionally juxtaposed a majority state-possessing nation and an ethnic minority. The triadic model, besides introducing minority kin-states (which Brubaker designates as 'external national homelands') as a significant contributing factor in nationalist politics, also offered a new, 'relational' approach to the study of ethnic conflict, as all three sides of the nexus are defined not as static actors or as 'fixed entities', but as dynamic relational fields within which perceptions, representations, interpretations, and, subsequently, claims, continuously shift and are closely intertwined, as well as being frequently contested by the actors involved.¹

The triadic nexus model proved to be particularly popular in the study of ethnic relations in Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed came to dominate the field, allowing Pettai (2006: 125) to call it 'almost a cliché'. David Smith (2002) was the first to expand the model by adding a fourth dimension to the nexus, namely, international organisations such as the European Union, the European Council, the OSCE, and NATO – an avenue later explored by many other commentators (see Tesser 2003, Kemp 2006, Galbreath 2005). This fourth dimension has also attracted criticisms – for example, Kemp (2006:123), after successfully exploring what he terms a 'fourth variable' (i.e. the international community and its role in domestic politics), as well as appending another important contributing factor, international law, and somewhat unexpectedly concludes that 'the international community is not a player, so one should not amend Brubaker's theory to speak of a quadratic nexus'. Instead, Kemp argues that (2006: 123), the international community 'provides a framework, standards and potential mediation in cases when the actors have exhausted domestic and bilateral means of resolving their differences'.

¹ Brubaker's concept of the 'relational field' is based on the notion of field developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (see, for example, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu envisioned the field as 'a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question', and posited that 'to think in terms of field is to *think relationally*' (1992: 100, 96). Notably, Bourdieu's framework for analysis in terms of field is also triadic (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 104-5).

Perhaps one should read this interpretation of the supposedly ‘hands-off’ role of international organisations as if it were a category of analysis rather than a category of practice, or, in other words, as a normative description of the niche the international organisations ultimately aspire to fill in an ideal world rather than a reflection of existing reality. Another argument in defence of the fourth dimension of the nexus is that the original triadic model does not conceive the elements of the nexus as ‘actors’ (although there are ‘actors’ in each given field), but rather as interconnected ‘relational fields’. Furthermore, Brubaker, in fact, distinguishes between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ relational fields and posits that the central aspect of the nexus is reciprocal interfield monitoring, where ‘actors in each field closely and continuously monitor relations and actions in each of the other two fields’, and where the representation of other fields is often contested and becomes the object of ‘representational struggle’ (Brubaker 1995: 118). Therefore, even if one accepts Kemp’s normative definition of international organisations as ‘non-actors’, there is little doubt that the ‘fourth dimension’ does constitute a relational field according to Brubaker’s theory (and to the original theory of fields by Bourdieu, for that matter). Consequently, the author begs to differ with Kemp on the subject of amending Brubaker’s framework, and votes firmly for the ‘quadratic nexus’.

1.1 The ‘Fifth Element’

In fact, this paper would like to suggest there is yet another side to the national question, another ‘relational field’ in the nexus: the complicated interplay *between* different national minorities sharing the same homeland along with the core nation. This ‘fifth element’ is vital for the comprehensive analysis of interethnic relations in the cases where more than one sizeable ethnic minority is present in the same state (or indeed was present in the past – more on this point later on) as it has a direct impact on minorities’ relations with the eponymous nation, with their respective kin-states, with international organisations, and on the overall state of majority-minority relations in a given country.

This fifth dimension of ethnic relations has been conspicuously overlooked by nationalism studies.² Brubaker (1996: 60) himself, for example, speaks of variance within a national minority, which he views not simply as a group, but rather as a 'dynamic political stance', or even a 'family of related but mutually competing stances', and of the variation of cultural and political demands which different national minorities can make of their respective states, but he never speaks about the variance among national minorities within the *same* state.

Despite claiming that the triadic relation is '*a relation between relational fields; and relations between the three fields are closely intertwined with relations internal to, and constitutive of, the fields*' (Brubaker 1996: 67), Brubaker, when applying the framework to the case of interwar Poland, stops short of examining this other dimension. He meticulously analyses relations between the Polish nationalising state, its four biggest ethnic minorities (i.e., the Germans, the Jews, the Ukrainians, and the Belarussians), and their external homelands (Germany, the Belarussian and Ukrainian Socialist Republics, and, for the Jews, 'a homeland distant not only in space but also ... in time', Palestine). Further on, Brubaker scrupulously accounts for the cultural, economic and political differences in the position of each minority, and for the divergent ways in which they were perceived by the majority nation, as well as for the variations in the claims they in return made on that majority nation, delivering, as promised, a 'relational and interactive perspective'. But what is conspicuously missing from this account is the relational interplay among these four minority groups, which, although largely living in segregation, did, in fact, interact in the sphere of politics, and especially in the sphere of minority politics.

The same element is also noticeably missing from subsequent studies of ethnic conflict based upon Brubaker's triadic model, or the enhanced 'quadratic nexus'. Although many authors pay attention to the variances within a specific ethnic minority, or the variations among different minorities (especially those studies that have a historical component), no attempt has yet been made to look into relations between different minorities and to link these to the other parts of the nexus, either triadic or quadratic.

² A notable exception is Mendelsohn's 'The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars' (1983), which accounts not just for the relations of the Jews with the eponymous nations, but also – more often than not, with an effect detrimental to the Jewish situation – with other ethnic minorities within the same states.

The 'relational, dynamic, interactive approach to the nationalist conflict', advocated by Brubaker (1996: 75), which was greatly enhanced by the addition of a fourth dimension of international organisations, would further benefit from taking into account this 'fifth element' of the interplay between several national minorities, as this paper will demonstrate with the example of interwar Latvia.

This paper is based on the experience of non-territorial cultural autonomy in interwar Latvia, or, more precisely, from the date of its independence in 1918 until the authoritarian *coup* of 1934, when minority rights were sharply curtailed. After briefly describing the first four dimensions of the nexus of interethnic relations in interwar Latvia in order to provide the necessary background, it will then move on to the fifth one. In order to do so, the paper will concentrate on the relationship between two of the Latvian ethnic minorities of the period, the Baltic Germans and the Jews, represented by the liberal democrat Paul Schiemann (1876-1944) and by the socialist Zionist Max Matatyahu Laserson (1887-1951) respectively. Schiemann and Laserson happened to be the two foremost advocates of cultural autonomy in Latvia. Although the two men shared a firm commitment to parliamentary democracy and to the advocacy of minority rights both domestically and internationally, they did not always see eye to eye. Their personal disagreements both on practical issues like the legal basis and the actual implementation of cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities in Latvia, and on more fundamental matters such as the impact of non-territorial cultural autonomy (NCA) on state sovereignty (which were further exacerbated by the pressure applied on them by their respective ethnic communities), shed an interesting light on the dynamics of intergroup minority relations (*vis-à-vis* each other and *vis-à-vis* the state) in interwar Latvia. They also have deep resonance with the modern debates on minority rights.³

The idea of cultural autonomy in Latvia was championed by the social democrats, who came into the vanguard of the national movement after the Russian Revolution of 1905. At the time, the pinnacle of Latvian national aspirations was an autonomous Latvia within a democratic Russia. The Latvian Social Democrats (LSD), like many of their peers in Central and Eastern Europe, were great supporters of the idea of cultural autonomy developed by Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto

³ Different attitudes towards NCA among the Baltic Germans and other ethnic minorities were previously observed by Smith and Hiden (2012: 82-4), when examining the implementation of NCA in the Baltic States during the interwar period.

Bauer, which allowed them to combine national aspirations with socialist fervour. Two prominent Latvian social democrats, Mārgers Skujenieks and Miķelis Valters, published their own works on the national question, which were largely inspired by Bauer.⁴ Both paid great attention to ethnic diversity within Latvian territories, with Skujenieks (1913: 10) even remarkably positing that ‘the central question of the national problem is how to arrange the common life of different peoples within one state or region.’⁵ When, as a result of the kaleidoscopic changes in the international situation at the end of World War One, Latvians seized the opportunity to become a sovereign nation instead of an autonomous republic, it seemed only logical to extend the same principles which Latvians had deemed appropriate for themselves in the past to their newly created national minorities.

2. The First Dimension: Nationalising State

Turning attention to the first side of the nexus, which Brubaker designated as the ‘nationalising state’, it needs to be said that at the beginning of Latvian statehood, the nationalising trend had not manifested itself explicitly. The newly created democratic Latvian Republic guaranteed cultural rights to the ethnic minorities living within its territory and from the very start the founders of the state assured minorities of their intention to build a united civic Latvian nation, where people of all ethnic backgrounds were welcome. The document known as the National Council Platform defined Latvia as a united, sovereign and independent democratic republic. Article 4 of the Platform, which was dedicated to minority rights, declared that national minorities could send their representatives to the Constitutional Assembly and to legislative bodies on a proportional representation basis; that minorities represented in the National Council could participate in the Provisional Government on a coalition basis; and that the national and cultural rights of national minorities were protected by constitutional law.

The newly appointed Prime Minister K. Ulmanis emphasised in his speech that ‘All citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, are invited to help out [in building the new state], as the rights of all ethnic

⁴ Skujenieks, M. 1913. *Nazionalais jautājums Latvijā*. Pēterburgā, A. Gulbja apgādībā; Valters, M. 1914. *Mūsu tautības jautājums. Doms par Latvijas tagadni un nākotni*. Brisele : Jaunu Rakstu apgādeens, Generalkomisijā pie A. Waltera, J. Rapas u. Beedr.

⁵ All translations are by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

groups will be guaranteed by the Latvian state. It will be a state of democratic fairness, where there will be no place for oppression and injustice.’⁶

Notably, all of these events took place two months prior to the start of the Paris Peace Conference on 18 January 1919, and seven months ahead of the signing of the Polish Minority Treaty (28 June 1919) – the first in the series of treaties that aimed to protect newly created national minorities. In other words, Latvians introduced measures to protect minorities of their own accord and without any direct pressure from the outside world.

On 8 December 1919, the National Council passed two laws. A Law on Latvian Educational Institutions stipulated that all compulsory school studies were to be conducted in the pupil’s ‘family language’ and obliged state and municipal institutions to maintain as many schools for each ethnic group as were necessary for their children’s compulsory education.⁷ A Law on Minority Schools in Latvia established Minority Departments within the Ministry of Education to represent ‘their respective ethnic group in all cultural affairs, with the right to liaise with all departments of the Ministry of Education, as well as to participate, in an advisory capacity, in the sessions of the Cabinet of Ministers related to any aspects of the cultural life of their respective ethnic group.’⁸ This remarkable piece of legislation, which was the most liberal law on minority education in Europe at the time (the even more advanced Estonian Law on Cultural Autonomy would not be passed until 1925), did not give rise to any substantial objections from among the delegates, and was passed unanimously, with only 18 abstentions.⁹ The two legal acts taken together secured minorities’ practical control over their own education and cultural affairs. Later on, their rights to cultural autonomy were supposed to be enshrined in the future constitution and specific autonomy laws.

This somewhat idealistic, ‘multicultural’ vision of the new statehood elaborated by the novice Latvian lawmakers, however, was soon tested by various practical challenges. Some of these chal-

⁶ *Jaunākās Ziņas*, Nr. 4, 11 November 1918.

⁷ ‘1919. g. 8. Decembra sehdē peenemtais Likums par Latwijas izglihtības eestahdem’, *Waldibas Wehstnesis*, Nr. 88, 17 December 1919.

⁸ ‘1919.g. 8. decembra sehdē peenemtais Likums par mazakuma tautibu skolu eekahrtu Latwijā’, *Waldibas Wehstnesis*, Nr. 89, 18 December 1919.

⁹ The precise number of votes cast during that particular session is not known, but the total number of delegates of the National Council at the end of 1919 was 183 (see, for example, Bleiere *et al.* 2005: 126).

allenges were specific to the particular Latvian situation, such as the high level of fragmentation among political parties that led to frequent changes of governments, while others arose due to changes on the international scene. Either way, during the interwar period the Latvian state was steadily becoming more nationalising, and it would not be long before the Latvians started reneging on their generous promises to minorities.

3. The Second Dimension: National Minorities

In 1920, Latvians comprised 72.8 per cent of the population, the rest being made up of the six largest ethnic minorities, i.e., Russians (12.6 per cent), Jews (5 per cent), Germans (3.6 per cent), Poles (3.4 per cent), Lithuanians (1.6 per cent), and Estonians (0.6 per cent).¹⁰ In this respect, Latvia was not unlike the rest of Eastern Europe during the interwar period – in fact, Latvia's percentage of ethnic minorities, far from being exceptional, at 27.3 per cent stood slightly lower than the average percentage of 29.2 for all Eastern European states (Pearson 1983: 148).

What were the minorities' reactions to the founding of the new state? They ranged from a negative attitude on the part of conservative Baltic Germans to a sceptical, wait-and-see one on the part of the Jews, and indifference on the part of Latvian Russians (Hiden 2004, Cerūzis 2004, Dribins 2002, Apine 2007). Overall, this notable lack of enthusiasm on the part of the national minorities at the moment when the new state was born but when its fate was still far from certain, bears witness to the fact that they did not share the national aspirations of ethnic Latvians. Instead, minorities assumed the role of passive onlookers. This wary cautiousness, however, had a number of plausible explanations. Conservative Germans were offended that their carefully nurtured project of uniting the Latvian and Estonian territories under Baltic German leadership had been cruelly snatched away. Besides, considering the long history of animosity between them and the Latvians, they suddenly found themselves in a precarious position. The more liberally inclined Germans, as well as the Jews and the Russians, although not opposed to the idea of an independent Latvian state, nevertheless felt threatened by the new order of things, despite Latvian assurances of protection of minority rights. Everybody was entering uncharted waters – especially taking into account the deep existing segregation among Latvia's ethnic groups in all spheres of

¹⁰ Source: Skujeneeks, M. 1927. *Latvija. Zeme un iedzīvotāji*. Rīga: A. Gulbja apgādniecība.

public life, and the inevitable resulting lack of communication. The Latvian national movement leading the path to independence had a strictly ethnic membership; minorities did not participate in the foundation of the new state, but were presented with the fact of its existence. Mutual trust could not arise out of nowhere; the promises of equality made by the Latvians were reassuring, but minorities questioned their underlying motives.

4. The Third Dimension: External Homelands

Between the world wars, three of the Latvian ethnic minorities had powerful kin-states, namely Russia, Germany and Poland. Two of them, the Russians and the Germans, also happened to be the former historical 'oppressors' of the ethnic Latvian nation, while the Polish landlords in Latgale, the eastern part of Latvia, had also formerly been in a privileged position. Communist Russia was always regarded as a threat, but, over the course of a few years, Germany also became an aggressive authoritarian state. As for Latvia's relationship with Poland, which was at the time still considered a guarantor of stability in the region, it was anything but simple. Latvia tended to view Poland, with whom, prior to World War Two, it had shared a border, with 'considerable suspicion', questioning its real intentions in the region and fearing its possible designs on Latgale, the Eastern part of Latvia (Stranga 1994: 47). As a result of external threats, both real and imagined, the trend was eventually set of viewing the Russian, German, and Polish communities of Latvia as a potential 'fifth column', pushing them to the margins of political life and increasing their sense of alienation. Undeniably, there was also a certain growth of Latvian minorities' own ethnic nationalism in the 1930s, in response to the nationalist fever that overtook their kin states at the time. This minority ethnic nationalism was further fuelled by ethnic Latvians' suspicions and often-unfair accusations of political disloyalty and subversion.

Indeed, when it came to 'external homelands', minorities could hardly put a foot right – for example, the minorities' faction, led by the Baltic German P. Schiemann and the Russian delegate V. Presnyakov, was initially opposed to the Armistice Treaty with a non-democratic government of Bolshevik Russia (which Latvia signed on 1 February 1920). This did not earn minorities any kudos with ethnic Latvians – instead, they were immediately accused by the nationalistic writer Jānis Akuraters of monarchical sympathies: he based this assumption on the fact that both these minorities had been in a privileged position under the Russian Empire. 'They only want peace with a

“democratic Russia”, because their democratic Russia is hiding under the masks of Kolchak and Denikin,’ claimed Akuraters.¹¹ This Jesuitical casuistry would become a favourite weapon used by ethnic nationalists against the minorities during the interwar period – whatever position the minorities took on Soviet Russia, they were promptly accused of being either Bolsheviks or monarchists. For example, the openly anti-Bolshevik editorial team of the biggest Russian-language daily, *Segodnya*, was often portrayed by their Latvian counterparts as a ‘clique of monarchists’.¹²

5. The Fourth Dimension: International Society

Moving on, let us now consider the fourth aspect of the nexus, international organisations and international law. Laserson (1971: 128), recollecting Latvians’ benevolent attitude towards the minorities at the time when the law on minority education was being passed, writes: ‘This situation changed completely, however, when the question of national minority rights passed from the field of internal legislation to that of international security.’ When Latvia joined the League of Nations in September 1921, it was, along with other new and enlarged European states, required to sign a minority treaty guaranteeing fair treatment of its ethnic minorities.¹³ This did not go down well with the Latvian government, which argued that minorities’ protection was already enshrined in the country’s liberal constitution, and that the imposition of minority treaties on selected European states was a violation of the principle of equality. Furthermore, Latvia argued that the internationalisation of minority rights through the treaties opened the door to foreign interventions and endangered state sovereignty. (Robinson *et al.*, 1943: 166) Instead of agreeing to be fully bound by the minority treaty, Latvia – along with Albania, Estonia, and Lithuania – only acquiesced to signing declarations to the Council of the League of Nations (Dickinson 1928: 10). Latvia’s negotiations with the League of Nations were protracted and unhappy. The resulting Latvian declara-

¹¹ ‘Par Tautas Padomes sēdi’, *Jaunākās Ziņas*, No. 114, 08 October 1919.

¹² Although *Segodnya* had always tried to position itself as an organ of the Latvian Russian minority, and not of the Russian emigrants, it was often caught in a crossfire between the Latvians’ suspicions and allegations from the Soviet Union in aiding the monarchists’ cause, on several occasions narrowly avoiding closure (see Fleishman, Abyzov and Ravdin 1997).

¹³ The system of minority protection put in place by the League of Nations consisted of three elements: the dedicated *minority treaties* between the Allied and Associated Powers and Poland (1919), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1919), Czechoslovakia (1919), Romania (1919), and Greece (1920); minority provisions made within the *peace treaties* between the Allies and Austria (1919), Bulgaria (1919), Hungary (1920), and Turkey (1923); and unilateral *declarations* of states upon their admission to the League of Nations (Albania (1921), Lithuania (1922), Latvia (1923), Estonia (1923), and, later, also Iraq (1932). (Akermark 1997; Jackson Preece 1998).

tion avoided the word 'guarantee' in relation to minorities, but stipulated the right of the League of Nations to re-open negotiations with Latvia if in future the situation of minorities in the country was found wanting in comparison to the standards set in the minority treaties (Macartney 1929: 20). The declaration was finally signed in July 1923, but not before Latvia's chief negotiator, M. Valters, had tried to get the minorities to agree to waive their rights to any international guarantees, thus proving to the world that they were happy in Latvia. Laserson (1971: 130) attests that in February 1923 Valters had two unofficial meetings with the minorities' MPs, but failed to convince them. The Baltic Germans were hoping to perhaps file complaints related to the Agrarian Reform¹⁴, which they considered to be an anti-German measure, and 'the Jews and Russians were likewise not in any great hurry to sell their international birthright for a series of local rights and laws' (Laserson 1971: 131).

It is noteworthy that Latvian minorities were generally not happy with the position taken by the League of Nations' negotiator, M. da Gama, *vis-à-vis* the Latvian government. Laserson, for example, wrote at the time that da Gama had failed to take into consideration that the process of legalisation of minority rights in Latvia, clearly demonstrated by the Law on Minority Schooling, was already under way. Instead of capitalising on these existing achievements, da Gama pursued relatively minor rights, like the right to observe religious holidays and other similar issues, thus never proceeding to discuss questions of cultural autonomy. From the point of view of ethnic minorities, these demands were not ambitious enough. On the other hand, da Gama's version of the declaration foresaw the right of third parties to interfere with the provision of minority rights in Latvia, which was perceived by the ethnic Latvian majority as an infringement upon Latvia's state sovereignty. Therefore, both the minorities and the majority ended up being dissatisfied with the declaration, albeit for directly opposing reasons; while Valters opportunistically used this 'mutual' dissatisfaction against the declaration as such. Notably, Laserson also complained, in one of his articles, of the 'veil of secrecy' surrounding the whole affair, and the absence of public discussions and debates.¹⁵

¹⁴ The Agrarian Reform of the 1920s, which expropriated the German landlords, was an imperative economic measure in a country devastated by the war; however, there was also a motive of historical justice behind it (Aizsilnieks 1968: 234).

¹⁵ Laserson, M. 'Veleno podozhdāt', *Segodnya*, 11 July 1923.

The sharp-tongued Laserson (1971: 124) commented that 'the link between the outer world and the Minorities did not serve to make them more popular within the country. On the contrary, the old distrust of the Latvians towards their one-time masters the Germans and Russians was awakened afresh.' Both lost their former dominance, he writes, being overnight transformed 'from wolves to sheep and doing their best to appear down-trodden and oppressed'.

This, concludes Laserson, made them even less popular. Siding with the Latvians' enemies backfired for the Jews:

The common interests of the minorities compelled the Jewish Delegates to join with the others, and so we too were made to feel the sting of Latvian nationalism; even though historically speaking this had not previously been directed against the Jews and from time to time, in the course of negotiations for the setting up of a new Government, the Seim [*sic.*] deputies and Latvian statesmen used to proclaim that the Jews were the most faithful minority because they made no political demands and lacked any territorial romanticism of restoration. (Laserson 1971: 124)

Another international organisation that should be mentioned in this regard is the Nationalities Congress founded in 1925 in Geneva¹⁶, of which Schiemann was one of the founders, and Laserson a delegate. Another Latvian Jew, the leader of the religious Zionists M. Nurock, was also a delegate to the Congress. By then, Latvian minorities were largely disillusioned with the League of Nations, whose mechanisms had proved too weak to offer any protection or guarantees of stability; they heartily welcomed the Nationalities Congress, which they perceived as a new beacon of hope in the field of minority rights. The mere fact that the Germans were in the vanguard of the Congress made it unpopular with the Latvian government by association. Other Latvian ethnic minorities, however, followed the developments at the Congress with avid interest, and a special correspondent of *Segodnya* provided detailed accounts of the Congress's sessions.

¹⁶ The Congress of Organised European National Groups, or, as it is better known, the Nationalities Congress, was founded in Geneva in 1925 as a minority rights advocacy organisation representing ethnic minorities on the European level. The first congress drew over 50 delegates from 34 national groups of 17 different states, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe (the number of delegates grew up to 219 in subsequent years). Although the Congress had no official affiliation with the League of Nations, it actively endorsed the League's stance on equal political and economic rights for ethnic minorities in the newly created or enlarged states and held its annual meetings in Geneva shortly before the sessions of the League's Council (to which the Congress's resolutions were made available). Importantly, the Nationalities Congress advocated the principle of non-territorial cultural autonomy (Smith and Hiden 2012; Hirschhausen 2010).

6. The Fifth Element

And now, finally, the ‘fifth element’ – a glimpse into the relations of Latvian ethnic minorities with each other and the way that these affected their respective dealings with the majority. As observed by one of the contemporary critics of NCA, Walter Kemp (2005: 214), ‘one problem with the nationality principle is that it assumes that national groups are homogeneous’, while in reality members of a national group do not necessarily share the same interests or political views. The two ethnic communities in question, the Baltic Germans and the Latvian Jews of the interwar period, can serve as a perfect illustration of such internal diversity. It is customary to speak about the high level of fragmentation within the ethnically Latvian political parties during the interwar period, but the minorities’ political life was just as fragmented.

6.1 The Baltic Germans

The Baltic German community was by far the best-organised ethnic group in Latvia at the time. In fact, other minorities both envied and admired the high level of their internal organisation and discipline. Indeed, stories were circulated about the Baltic Germans carrying their sick and disabled to the polling stations on stretchers, so that not a single vote would be lost.¹⁷ As a result, both at the Constitutional Assembly and at all four Latvian interwar parliaments (or *Saeimas*), the Baltic Germans consistently held more seats than their respective share of the population would have warranted.¹⁸ The high level of discipline among the German community becomes even more impressive once all the internal divisions are taken into account. Along social-economic lines, the Baltic Germans were divided into four major ‘hermetically sealed’ groups: the nobility; the middle class and the members of liberal professions; the merchants; and the artisans and craftsmen (Hiden 2004: 10). Politically, they were divided into the right-wing conservatives, the moderate centre-right, and the liberals.

¹⁷ During the elections to the Constitutional Assembly, *Segodnya* wistfully reported: ‘Germans close ranks at the elections. At the polling stations in the German-populated areas, more than half the electors have already voted by the end of the first day. Even ill and injured people are being carried to the polling stations.’ (‘Vybery’, *Segodnya*, No. 88, 18 April 1920).

¹⁸ For comparison, the Russians were consistently under-represented, while the Jews and the Poles managed to secure proportional representation.

Table 1. Baltic German Representation in the interwar Latvian Saeima

Political Orientation	Name of the Party	Represented by
Conservative centre-right	The German Balt People's Party	Wilhelm von Fircks
Moderate centre-right	The German Balt Reform Party	Edwin Magnus
The Liberals	The German Balt Democratic Party	Paul Schiemann
	The Progressive Party	Eduard Rosenberg

These groups took opposing stances on Latvia's independence: whereas German conservatives attempted to claim a special status as the second sovereign nationality, P. Schiemann recognised the Latvian nation-state without reservations (minority rights guarantees notwithstanding, obviously). There were no socialists among the Baltic Germans. In the *Saeima*, the German parties tended to vote with the Latvian Agrarian Union and the centre parties.

Schiemann became one of the most active Latvian parliamentarians, speaking on all the important pieces of legislation in the *Saeima* and without limiting himself to minorities' direct interests. He also became the recognised leader of the Minorities Bloc. Not to mention that he was also the editor-in-chief of the biggest German daily, *Rigasche Rundschau*, and hardly a day went by without him authoring an editorial on some topical political issue. Nevertheless, Schiemann often found himself 'between a rock and a hard place' when he tried to navigate between the interests of the Baltic German community (especially the demands of its conservative part) and the tasks of the Minorities Bloc in the *Saeima*, while at the same time trying to keep good working relations with the Latvian majority.

The centuries-long history of animosity between ethnic Latvians and their German 'oppressors' contributed to interethnic tensions during the interwar period. The Agrarian Reform, and the subsequent expropriation of two churches belonging to the German congregation, the *Jakob Kirche* in 1923 and the Dome Cathedral in 1931, which the Baltic Germans perceived as acts of ethnic discrimination, only served to deepen the rift. In spite of this, there was limited and largely 'off-the-record' support for the Baltic Germans among some cultured Latvians, for many of whom German had been, at least in the past, a mother tongue. That allowed the Baltic German conservatives to stubbornly maintain futile hopes for some kind of special treatment from the Latvians, in recognition of their outstanding role in the cultural and economic life of the country. It also allowed them

to look down on other Latvian ethnic minorities, whom they, just like ethnic Latvians, considered to be culturally inferior and politically immature.

6.2 The Jews

The internal divisions in Jewish political life in Latvia closely mirrored those in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. The main dividing line, to paraphrase E. Mendelsohn (1983: 44), was the question of 'here' and 'there', or, in other words, whether the Jewish question could be resolved more successfully by staying in the diaspora, or by returning to the ancestral home in Palestine, or, alternatively, by seeking some other territory with a view to creating a sovereign state. Zionism was opposed both by the socialists (who believed that the Jewish people should fight for their political and social rights where they were) and by the Orthodox Jews (who did not oppose the idea of return in principle, but believed that it could not be done without divine intervention). Notably, the Orthodox Jews also opposed cultural autonomy in the diaspora as a secular institution, insisting instead on the traditional Jewish practice of *Shtadlanut*, or intercession – in other words, lobbying for the interests of the common Jewish people with the authorities.

The language question was also extremely divisive – proponents of staying in the diaspora advocated Yiddish as the traditional daily language of Eastern European Jews, reserving a place for Hebrew as the language of religious ceremonies. The Zionists, on the other hand, saw Yiddish as a low dialect developed under oppression, and wanted to revive Hebrew as a language of daily communication, which would carry a huge symbolic meaning of both liberation and a reconnection with the historical past. There was also another group, the so-called assimilationists, who supported neither Yiddish nor Hebrew but instead believed that Jews should be acculturated into their respective host nations.

Another dividing line separated religious and secular Jews: the former insisted on the primacy of religious identity, whereas the latter put forward an idea of a Jewish national identity. Finally,

even the Jewish socialists were divided – there were Bundists, socialist Zionists and Bolsheviks among them.¹⁹

Table 2. Jewish Representation in the interwar Latvian Saeima

Name of the Party	Political Orientation	Represented by
The <i>Bund</i>	Socialist, secular, pro-diaspora and pro-Yiddish. Closely aligned with the social democrats.	Noah Maizel
The <i>Agudas Isroel</i>	Conservative Orthodox, pro-diaspora, Pro-Yiddish, pro- <i>Shtadlanut</i> .	Mordechai Dubin, an archetype of a <i>Shtadlan</i>
The Jewish National Democrats (only until the 2 nd <i>Saeima</i>)	Wealthy middle class and professionals, inclined towards assimilation/acculturation with the Latvians, and therefore pro-diaspora but both anti-Yiddish and anti-Hebrew. Voted with the Agrarian Union and the centre parties.	Leopold Fišman and Paul Mintz
The <i>Zeire Zion</i>	Socialist Zionist, secular, pro-Hebrew and anti- <i>Shtadlanut</i> . Voted with the social democrats.	Max Laserson
The <i>Mizrahi</i>	Religious Zionist, pro-Hebrew, with close contacts with the World Jewish Congress. Usually voted with the socialists.	Marcus (Mordechai) Nurock

Max Laserson, the leader of the Latvian socialist Zionists, was one of the most prominent and energetic members of the *Saeima*, where, along with Schiemann, he was active in the Constitutional and the Public Law Committees, as well as in the minorities' faction. An ardent proponent of the League of Nations and of the international regime of minority rights protection, Laserson assiduously argued against adversaries of these ideas in the pages of *Segodnya* in the course of the 1920s.

6.3 The Unlikely Allies, or *Distanzliebe*

The closest alliance formed on Latvia's minorities front was between the Baltic Germans and the Latvian Jews. There are several possible reasons behind this particular combination. Firstly, as observed by Laserson (1971: 98-99), the Baltic Germans regarded the presence of Jews in Latvia as a benefit – let us not forget that despite their influence, numerically the Baltic Germans were only

¹⁹ The Latvian Social Democrats and the *Bund* used to participate in all elections with a common candidates' list, which resulted in a widespread practice by the electors of crossing out the *Bund* candidates' names; the ethnically Latvian LSD candidates who were below them on the list would get elected instead. Laserson (1971: 124) claims that it was largely due to this practice that the *Bund* eventually started its own electoral list. This is just one example of ethnic affiliation trumping a political one in interwar Latvia.

the third largest minority in the country at 3.6 per cent; the 5 per cent represented by the Jewish minority meant a welcome further reduction in the 'overwhelming weight of the Latvian majority'. There was also cultural affinity, especially with the Jews from outside of the former Pale of Settlement, like, for example, the Jews of Kurland and a large proportion of the Jews of Riga, who were heavily influenced by German culture. This was further reinforced by the fact that in Europe at the time, Germany still served as 'a spiritual centre of sorts' for Ashkenazi Jews (Laserson 1971: 132). An additional consideration for the Baltic Germans was the fact that unlike themselves, the Russians and the Poles, the Latvian Jews had never been in a dominant position in the past, but had been even more oppressed than the ethnic Latvians. This fact alone meant that many Latvians regarded the Jews as their 'most loyal minority'. Furthermore, the sizeable German and Jewish minorities lived side-by-side in most of the new and enlarged European states, which logically brought them into the vanguard of the European minorities movement (at the Nationalities Congress, the Jews (25) formed the second largest group of members, surpassed only by Germans (74); Hirschhausen 2010: 93). Finally, since the Baltic German and Jewish communities were the most politically active among ethnic minorities in Latvia, and were represented in the *Saeima* by two such outstanding leaders as Schiemann and Laserson, this cooperation was very natural. However, we will see that this political symbiosis was not an easy one. Similar to the relationship between the German and Jewish communities in the Czech lands, the affiliation between the Baltic Germans and the Latvian Jews can be best described as *Distanzliebe*.²⁰

In 1920, when the Baltic Germans were desperately fighting against the Agrarian Reform at the Constitutional Assembly²¹, the Jewish and the Russian blocs jointly signed a petition in the Germans' support to the Agrarian Commission of the Assembly, which was rejected as 'reactionary' and caused outrage in the press. Laserson (1971: 112-113) expressed indignation that by appending their signatures to it, the members of the Jewish bloc entered into moral and political association with the opponents of the agrarian reform' and thus had compromised their special standing with Latvians, identifying themselves 'in the eyes of the Latvian masses with the long-term oppres-

²⁰ 'Love at a distance' (Germ.) - a term coined by one of the leading Jewish intellectuals of Prague, Max Brod (1884-1968), as quoted in Mendelsohn (1983: 136).

²¹ The Constitutional Assembly of Latvia (1920-2) was its first elected legislative body charged with three fundamental tasks: to work out the new country's constitution, to provide the legal basis for the much-needed agrarian reform, and to pass the Law on *Saeima's* Elections.

sors of the latter. Overall, as Laserson (1971: 124) observes: 'A measure of psychological animosity towards the minorities was inevitable in view of the fact that the Germans were among them, and more precisely at their head.'

Despite the aforementioned fact that in the 1920s ethnic Latvians widely regarded the Jews as their most loyal minority (or, at the minimum, as the least suspect), it did not mean that there was no animosity towards Jews in the Latvian society. During World War One and in its immediate aftermath, anti-Jewish sentiments were running high in Latvia, as in most countries in Eastern Europe. Jews were turned into scapegoats, charged with numerous sins, like helping the advance of the German troops, spying for the Habsburgs, and aiding the Bolsheviks. Intensified by the deprivations of the war, these accusations turned into public hysteria directed against the vulnerable ethnic minority. Anti-Jewish disturbances continued in Ukraine, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, and Poland during the period from 1918 until 1921 (Mendelsohn 1983; Pearson 1983). They reached Latvia in the summer of 1920, when in the cities of Riga, Daugavpils and Rēzekne, Jewish properties were vandalised, and those who looked Jewish were stopped in the streets and cruelly mocked, while their money and valuables were unceremoniously confiscated by looters. Fortunately, though, nobody was seriously hurt.²²

Another constant source of animosity among ethnic Latvians towards the Latvian Jewish minority was the choice its many members made in favour of the Russian language as their daily language of communication, and their penchant for Russian culture in general. Seeing it as a sign of betrayal, Latvian nationalists increasingly held it against the Jews (a recurrent theme in the writing of the nationalist writer E. Blanks, who famously claimed that 'The Jews are unacceptable to us in the first place as Russian Jews'²³). This peculiar 'national jealousy' was also reflected in the newspaper published by the Social Democrats-Mensheviks, *Darba Balss*:

Whether you walk along the street, or ride in a train, or in a tram, there are sounds of the Russian language everywhere... A stranger newly arriving in Latvia might get the impression that the majority of local residents are Russians. But if we take a closer look at these

²² Bergs, A. 'Iekschleetu ministra paskaidrojums', *Jaunākās Ziņas*, Nr. 124, 03.06.1920; 'Vystuplenija protiv evreev v Rige', *Segodnya*, Nr. 121, 03 June 1920; 'Vystupleniya protiv evreev 2 iyunya', *Segodnya*, Nr. 122, 04 June 1920; 'Par pehdejo deenu eelas notikumeem', *Latvijas Kareivis*, Nr. 86, 05 June 1920.

²³ Blanks, E. 'Muhsu nazonālā politika un minoritates', *Latvijas Wehstnesis*, 21 October 1922.

‘Latvian Russian’ faces, it becomes obvious that these supporters of everything Russian are nobody else but our own Jews.²⁴

In other words, neither the Baltic German nor the Jewish minority in Latvia felt fully secure in their own right; when attempting cooperation, among themselves, or with other ethnic minorities, they always entered treacherous waters, and the consequences were often unpredictable. Schiemann and Laserson did their best to rise above the factional struggle of their own communities and to act in pursuit of the overarching minority interests, and the principal interests of the Latvian democratic state, but they often ended up on opposing sides.

During the summer of 1922, when the Constitutional Committee of the Assembly was reviewing draft laws on minority languages, Schiemann and Laserson assumed conflicting positions. Laserson was convinced that the issue of the use of minority languages, which he called ‘the most important question of self-determination’, required one principal law that would guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities to use their respective languages in the state administration and in the courts.²⁵ He argued that if the draft laws on the rights of German, Russian and Jewish languages were discussed separately, then the committee and the plenary of the Assembly would be guided not so much by principles of justice, but by existing Germano- or Russophile currents. In other words, decisions would be dictated by affinities in the case of some ethnic groups and languages, and by repulsion in the case of others. The only way to avoid this, stressed Laserson, was by adopting a single uniform law that would have been ‘maximally favourable towards all’.²⁶

Schiemann, on the other hand, was just as categorical that ‘such a generalisation would not give anything to each separate minority’, and that a uniform law as suggested by Laserson should be ‘most energetically resisted’. When dealing with bureaucracy, explained Schiemann, it is absolutely impossible to regulate the right to make oral statements or submit written petitions consistently for all minorities. ‘Such a generalisation would offer nothing to a single minority, and would place an unbearable burden on public bureaucracy,’ posited Schiemann. Besides, time is an issue, stressed Schiemann, and the whole issue should be sped up before the Constitutional Assembly finished its work: ‘if we just passed one separate language law now, more would be achieved for

²⁴ Kolonels, ‘Mūsmāju ‘krievi’, *Darba Balss*, 23 January 1922.

²⁵ Laserson, M. ‘Zakon o yazykah men’shinstv’, *Segodnya*, 30 June 1922.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the interests of all minorities in general than if we continued discussing general theory for another half a year'.²⁷ In the end, nobody was a winner – neither the Law on the German minority language, nor the language laws for the other minorities were ever passed.

During the same year of 1922, to the utter dismay of Laserson, Schiemann also supported the idea of a separate law on cultural autonomy for each respective minority, and successfully lobbied for this idea at the Constitutional Assembly. In March 1922, the separate Baltic German and the Jewish autonomy draft laws were accepted for review. The Russian draft law was submitted two months later. However, the Constitutional Assembly did not manage to review the laws, and the matter was postponed until the election of the First *Saeima*.

In 1923, the German faction finally deemed the time right and submitted their separate draft law on cultural autonomy to the Public Law Committee of the *Saeima*. The draft law submitted foresaw the public incorporation of the Baltic German Autonomous Council, the right of the Council to collect taxes and to create a national register of its members. It specified the organisational structure of the Council and its regional bodies, the use of the German language in administration and public life, and reiterated the principles of minority schooling.

All these proposals were met with fierce opposition from the Latvian majority, signalling that the benevolent attitude towards minorities' cultural autonomy that the Latvians displayed in 1918-19 was a thing of the past. The right to self-taxation and the creation of a national register, which Schiemann believed to be the two pillars of cultural autonomy, were either deemed too far-reaching as an attempt 'to create a state within a state', or questioned on the technical side – there were many objections to the national register based upon the ethnicity record in the passport made according to the owner's instructions. The Latvian opposition demanded 'documental proof' instead. Among the Baltic Germans themselves, there was no agreement whether inclusion on the register had to be compulsory; their Latvian opponents capitalised on these internal divisions.

The German draft subsequently made it through the deliberations of the Public Law Committee, but after it was passed to the Education Committee, things started to look glum again. The Chair of

²⁷ Schiemann, P. 'Die Sprachengesetze', *Rigasche Rundschau*, 30 June 1922.

the Committee, K. Skalbe, whom Schiemann labelled as a 'reactionary of the purest kind' (Hiden 2004: 102) was fervently opposed to the project, his position fortified by the loud protests voiced by the Association of Secondary School Teachers, and the Union of Latvian Schoolteachers. Skalbe appeased the opposition by making sure that the draft law 'disappeared' from the agenda (Adamovičs 1927: 22).

This experience made Paul Schiemann change his mind – or at least his tactics. He now put his faith in the general law on minorities' cultural autonomy, so passionately advocated by Laserson. However, Schiemann failed to convince his conservative colleagues that such a law stood a better chance with the Latvian Parliament – Fircks described such a possibility as 'detrimental to our historic position in the country and our influence among the population' (Hiden 2004: 104). Laserson writes that the conservative Baltic Germans believed – naively – that the Latvians would agree more easily to their project of national autonomy in order 'to atone for their agrarian 'cruelty''. As for cooperation with the Russians, Laserson claims that the Germans believed that because of the long common frontier with Bolshevik Russia, ethnic Latvians would oppose autonomy for Latvian Russians (Laserson 1971: 133). As for the Jewish autonomy, the Baltic Germans believed it stood little chance because of dormant anti-Semitism and because 'the Jews in Latvia are in any case not mature enough to receive true cultural autonomy' (Laserson 1971: 134).

In the meantime, the Latvian Poles submitted their autonomy project to the Parliament (similar to the Russian autonomy project, it was closely modelled on the German one), and finally, in January 1925, the Jewish project was submitted as well (notably, Schiemann appended his signature to the draft). It was the draft of the Jewish autonomy that drew most attention and was widely covered in the press.

During the deliberations at the Public Law Committee of the *Saeima*, it quickly became clear that the Latvian majority was not keen on far-reaching and strictly defined autonomy, as most objections were raised in relation to the right to self-taxation, and to the idea of a national register for each minority on the grounds that it threatened to create parallel structures to the state. In fact, no agreement could have been reached on these two issues among the Jews themselves. The *Aguda* was opposed to the idea of a 'secular' list, insisting that whenever a person converted to another religion, he or she had to be struck off the register; they even proposed creating two reg-

isters for the Jews.²⁸ The two parties that advocated the widest autonomy possible were the *Mizrahi* and the *Zeire Zion*. The only difference between them was question of whether to include religious functions under the autonomy: while Nurock insisted that to Jews, culture and religion were inseparable, the *Zeire Zion* and the *Bund* argued that autonomy had to be secular, and that non-religious Jews should not have to pay for the 'religious needs of the others'.²⁹

Predictably, it was the language issue that caused the biggest upheaval.³⁰ Both the *Aguda* and the *Bund* argued for Yiddish as the minority language, while the *Mizrahi* and the *Zeire Zion* insisted on Hebrew. Many prominent Social Democrats, including the Latvian national poet J. Rainis, sympathised with the latter as a 'progressive' language (Laserson 1971: 148); however, the general prevailing opinion was that it was Yiddish that was the daily language of the working masses. The National Democratic Party was not keen on either Hebrew or Yiddish, and suggested a free choice of language instead (to the dismay of the Social Democrats). A proposal was even made by the Jewish consultative body *Beirat* not to fix the language question in the law until the Jewish autonomous institution was elected.³¹ For many of the draft law clauses, the Jewish factions submitted their own parallel versions, which made the elaboration of the law extremely difficult and time-consuming (to the annoyance of the Latvians) and caused Laserson to state later that the Jewish law would not have been approved even if the German one had gone ahead (Laserson 1971: 137).

Schiemann also took a stand on the question of the language of instruction for Jewish schools: he claimed that as a truly secular institution, Jewish autonomy should be based on just one language – in this way opposing Laserson, who, desperate to push the law ahead, started to concede the inevitability of both Hebrew and Yiddish. In an article rebuffing Schiemann, Laserson claimed that Jewish autonomy could not be judged by normal standards because of the unique history of the Jewish people. Later, Schiemann changed his position and supported the Jewish National Demo-

²⁸ But the very fact that the Orthodox *Agudas Isroel* in Latvia supported the autonomy idea at all (elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe it was categorically opposed to it, insisting on the traditional practice of *Shtadlanut* instead) serves to show just how much importance the Latvian Jews, along with other Latvian minorities, assigned to proper legal incorporation of their autonomy rights.

²⁹ 'Russkaya i evreiskaya avtonomii', *Segodnya*, 26 March 1925.

³⁰ As observed by Mendelsohn (1983: 251), 'nowhere else in the East European diaspora was the language situation in Jewish schools so complex as it was in Latvia'.

³¹ 'Evreiskii Beirat o evreiskoi avtonomii', *Segodnya*, 29 January 1925.

crats in their advocacy of a free choice of any language (including other minority languages) according to the choice of parents.

All this disorderly confusion aggravated the already tense situation, much to the consternation of the Latvian majority. The social democrat-Menshevik M. Skujenieks acidly commented on the Jewish autonomy at one of the Committee's sessions: 'The Germans at least have a common language, which cannot be said about the Jews, who speak at least five different languages. For all nations, language and religion are the main determinants of belonging to a nation. There is no solidarity among Latvian Jews on either of these.'³² One by one, the minorities' autonomy draft laws were dismissed from the *Saeima's* agenda. By the end of 1925, it was clear to both Schiemann and Laserson that minority autonomy in Latvia was, at least for the time being, out of reach. Hiden (2004: 105) explains Schiemann's changed stance on the desirability of a general law on cultural autonomy by reference both to his concerns about 'wide European developments' and to 'his frustration with the *Saeima*'. Although Laserson was an early proponent of collective action on the part of Latvian minorities, by 1925 he was also increasingly frustrated both by the international situation with regard to minority rights and by its domestic status. It is no coincidence that the two most vociferous minority representatives in Latvia started searching for new solutions at the international level around the same time, becoming active at the newly founded Nationalities Congress in Geneva. And it is indicative both of Schiemann's recent experience in Latvia, and of his tentative ideological reconciliation with Laserson, that, speaking at the 1st Congress in 1925, he stressed that 'it is important that one minority helps another to achieve its goals. If they succeed, the question of loyalty will not arise anymore'.³³ After 1925, both Schiemann and Laserson, although remaining optimistic about the chances of the Nationalities Congress changing the status quo in the field of minority rights in Europe, started developing theoretical frameworks that nowadays would undoubtedly be classified as post-nationalist.

Schiemann first presented his theory of the *a-national state* at the 2nd Nationalities Congress in 1926, astonishing those present by insisting on the necessity of the separation of the nation and the state, thus putting an end to the nation-state in its recognised form. Hiden (2004: 134) de-

³² 'Evreiskii Beirat o evreiskoi avtonomii', *Segodnya*, 29 January 1925.

³³ Nikolskii, B. 'Poslednii den' kongressa menshinstv', *Segodnya*, 22 October 1925.

scribes the ‘storm of applause’ from the audience, and the enormous interest from the media that Schiemann’s original speech attracted, as well as some predictable negative reactions. In 1927, Schiemann further elaborated his views on the possible future of the nation-state in his programmatic article ‘*Volksgemeinschaft und Staatsgemeinschaft*’.³⁴

One year later, at the 3rd Congress, Laserson gave a paper on the state, minorities, and the decline of sovereignty. The main theses of this paper were later developed into a book.³⁵ Laserson’s paper was hardly a success at the Nationalities Congress. Although the debates that ensued demonstrated a pronounced disagreement on political, terminological and theoretical issues among the delegates themselves, practically all of them agreed that Laserson, who, not being in the habit of mincing words, refused to make concessions on the topics viewed as ‘sensitive’ and spoke of the ‘decline of sovereignty’ and the ‘abandonment of the territorial principle’ unreservedly, ‘was going too far’.³⁶

Although the delegates at the Nationalities Congress of 1927 by and large found Laserson’s theses on the state, state sovereignty and national communities untenable, several decades later, his theory was vindicated. Nowadays, so many scholars question sovereignty and the territorial nation-state, and speak about the decline of sovereignty and the rise of a post-sovereign and post-national world, that Suny (2011: 113) has been recently prompted to argue that the death of the nation-state has been ‘greatly exaggerated’ and that, significant changes in state sovereignty and national identification notwithstanding, it is premature to speak, as Appadurai (1996: 21) did, of a ‘terminal crisis’ of the nation-state.

Paul Schiemann did not have a chance of bringing his theory of the a-national state to full fruition – as it happened, he was betrayed many times over: by developments in his native Latvia, where an authoritarian coup of 1934 put an end to minorities’ cultural autonomy; by the metamorphosis of the Nationalities Congress, which within a few years was transformed from an international organisation for minority rights into ‘a tool of nationalistic and expansive German politics’ (Hirschhausen 2010: 98); and by the general rise of nationalistic sentiment in Europe, above all in

³⁴ Schiemann, P. 1927. ‘*Volksgemeinschaft und Staatsgemeinschaft*’, *Nation und Staat*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 21-41.

³⁵ Laserson, M. 1927. *Staat, Souveränität und Minorität*. Riga-Berlin: Bernhard Lamey.

³⁶ See ‘Der III. Kongress der Organisierten Nationalen Gruppen’, *Nation und Staat*, 1927, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 58-60.

the Reich, which inevitably led to the radicalisation of Baltic Germandom. In March 1933, Schiemann resigned from his position as editor of the *Rigasche Rundschau* on account of ill health, and departed for Vienna. In the autumn of the same year, he would relinquish his parliamentary mandate as well, thus ending his distinguished career as one of the most prominent politicians in interwar Latvia.

During the authoritarian *coup* of 1934, Laserson was imprisoned, along with the Latvian Social Democrats, at an internment camp in Liepāja. Upon his release, he emigrated first to Palestine, and then, in 1938-39 (dates vary across different sources), to the United States. Laserson settled in New York, where he taught at Columbia University and was also involved with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In addition, he was an active contributor to the Institute of Jewish Affairs, founded in 1940 by a Lithuanian Jewish lawyer, Jacob Robinson, which quickly became what Sznajder (2011: 88) describes as ‘a clearinghouse of information on the Nazi attempt to destroy the Jews of Europe’.

Overall, it may be said that this Latvian Jewish minority thinker, who demonstrated exemplary intellectual courage in swimming against the tide, shared the common fate of many who are ahead of their time – misunderstood by the majority of his contemporaries, he received no recognition for his theoretical work during his lifetime, and his legacy is largely forgotten. Certainly in Latvia, as in the Western world, Laserson earned at least some recognition after World War Two for his works on the history and politics of Soviet Russia and for his contribution to the volume ‘The Jews in Latvia’³⁷. His book ‘Russia and the Western World’ was positively reviewed by Hans Kohn and ran to several editions.³⁸

³⁷ Bobe, M. (ed.) 1971. *The Jews in Latvia*. Tel Aviv: Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel.

³⁸ See, for example, Laserson, M. 1945. *Russia and the Western World. The Place of the Soviet Union in the Comity of Nations*. New York: The Macmillan Company; Laserson, M. 1950. *The American Impact on Russia-diplomatic and ideological-1784-1917*. New York: Macmillan Co.; Laserson, M. 1943. *The development of Soviet foreign policy in Europe, 1917- 1942: a Selection of Documents*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Inexplicably, a recent edition of *Russia and the Western World* (Kessinger Publishers 2007; reprinted in 2010) gives the name of author as Max Laskerson.

7. Conclusion

The unlikely alliance between the Baltic German and the Jewish communities of interwar Latvia, reviewed in the previous section, illustrates how the complicated interplay between minority communities within the same state may influence, shape and alter their respective relations with the eponymous nation, with other ethnic minorities present, with the external homelands, and with international organisations. Sometimes, minorities may provide support to other ethnic groups out of solidarity, perhaps with strategic foresight, but with no immediate gain in view for themselves. At other times, minorities form alliances when they think that their own cause will be best served by presenting a united front, and promptly disengage when they feel that this cause may be tarnished by association with others. A minority, or minorities, may also not seek direct contact or association with another minority, but simply ‘jump on the band-wagon’ and use this minority’s (as well as its respective kin-state’s, and the international community’s on its behalf) existing achievements (in negotiating with the majority nation, or in securing a special status) as precedents in their own bargaining strategy. In short, this fifth relational field unfailingly informs the other four.

Moreover, this impact often lingers long after a particular minority has ceased to exist in a given country, or has been significantly changed in composition.³⁹ The Baltic German community in Latvia virtually vanished in 1939, when on Hitler’s orders they were relocated to ‘German territories’ (read – to the newly occupied Poland) – a development enthusiastically greeted by many ethnic Latvians at the time.⁴⁰ However, 50 years later, when Latvia regained independence in 1991, the perspective shifted, and Baltic Germans were granted some belated recognition. For example, a Latvian history book published in 2005 explicitly states: ‘From the present-day perspective, it is absolutely clear that the departure of the Baltic Germans was an irreplaceable loss. ...With their departure, an intellectual vacuum started to form in Latvia, which was further reinforced by later

³⁹ This phenomenon is traditionally overlooked by political scientists. A notable exception is Esman’s (2009) nuanced study of the ‘Russian’ diaspora in Israel – for example, he explains the guarded attitude of the Sephardim towards the 1990s influx of ‘Russian’ Jews by their ‘bitter memories of their earlier days in Israel when they or their parents were patronised by the Ashkenazic establishment, their culture demeaned, and their economic prospects blunted’ (Esman 2009: 74).

⁴⁰ Out of approximately 60,000 Baltic Germans, only 10,000 chose to remain in Latvia. After Latvia’s annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940, the majority of these left. In 1941, the final wave of Baltic German emigration depleted the number of those residing in Latvia to appx. 1,500. (Bleiere *et al.* 2005: 194).

Stalinist deportations, the Holocaust, and the residents' mass exodus after yet another occupation in 1945' (Bleiere *et al.* 2005: 194). Notably, the Latvian historian R. Cerūzis, in a study entitled 'The German Factor in Latvia (1918-1939). Political and Inter-Ethnic Aspects', tentatively draws a parallel between the 'German factor' in interwar Latvia and the 'Russian factor' in Latvia today (Cerūzis 2004: 3).

As for the interwar Jewish community of Latvia, it largely perished during the Holocaust. According to the last census carried out in interwar Latvia in 1935, the Jews constituted 5 per cent of the population, or about 94,000. In the course of 1941, about 70,000 of them were exterminated in Nazi-occupied Latvia. Those who escaped death, i.e. those who fled eastwards to the Soviet Union, those who were serving in the Soviet Army and survived the war, those who were liberated from the Nazi concentration camps, and, finally, part of those Jews who were repressed and deported in 1940 by the Soviets – altogether about 14,000 – returned to Latvia after World War Two (Dribins 2002). But from the summer of 1945 onwards, the Latvian Jewish community kept being replenished by settlers of Jewish ethnic background from other parts of the Soviet Union. After the Citizenship Law of 1994, which restricted automatic citizenship to the citizens of the interwar republic and to their direct descendants, had been passed, only 45 per cent of the 14,000-strong Latvian Jewish community were eligible for automatic citizenship.⁴¹ This data bear witness to the fact that, over the course of almost five decades, the *de facto* composition of the Jewish community was irrevocably changed.

This fact, however, was willingly overlooked by the nationalising (yet again) Latvian state, which readily recognised the Jewish community of 1988 as a successor to the interwar community, and has never since questioned its credentials (which was not the case with the other post-war ethnic minorities in Latvia). There are several possible explanations for this benevolent attitude. Firstly, the idea of the 'restoration' of the Jewish community resonated with Latvians' own pledge to restore the Latvian interwar state, lending it additional legitimacy. Secondly, similar to the interwar state, albeit for different reasons, the 'dissident' (opposed to the Soviet regime) Jews were re-

⁴¹ There are no readily available statistical data on the size of the Jewish population in 1994. I arrive at this approximate number by subtracting the approximate number of Jewish emigrants through the period from 1989 until 1994 (appx. 8,840) from the total size of the Jewish population in 1989 (22,900); i.e., the birth and death rates are not accounted for.

garded as Latvia's most loyal minority. Thirdly, during the national awakening of the 1980s, and in the early 90s, comparisons between the plight of the Jewish people and the fate of ethnic Latvians were rife, and allusions were often made to the similarity between the new Latvian state and Israel.⁴² Fourthly, there was an acknowledgement of the contribution made by some Jewish intellectuals (in particular M. Vulfsons) to the Popular Front movement. The last, but not the least consideration, was the Holocaust itself – as to whether that was an act of repentance or political correctness, opinions differ. Arguably, both played a role.

In any case, the Jewish community (under the initial guise of the Latvian Society for Jewish Culture) was the first to be re-established in Latvia in 1988, paving the way for other ethnic communities – by the end of the year, with the support of the Popular Front, the Association of the National Cultural Societies of Latvia (LNKBA) was established, uniting 18 newly created cultural societies and providing a platform for national minorities to discuss issues of cultural autonomy.

The most recent example of the relational interplay between different ethnic minorities, the Latvian state, and international society is perhaps the latest round of discussions, in 2012, on the issue of the restitution of Jewish properties in Latvia. Actively lobbied for by the United States, and explicitly supported by the Secretary of State Clinton during her visit to Latvia in June 2012, the restitutions provoked heated controversy in Latvia, causing the downfall of the Justice Minister G. Bērziņš, a representative of the right-wing nationalistic bloc in the parliament. Significantly, in the heat of the moment, the Latvian media reported 'that after the question of the restitution of Jewish properties came to the fore, the Latvian Russian community and the Latvian Roma Association have also started expressing an interest in property restitutions'.⁴³

All of the above supports the initial thesis that the so-called fifth dimension of the nexus, the relational interplay among different national minorities within the same state, is essential for the analysis of interethnic relations, as it enhances our understanding of the forces at work in ethnic politics, both in the past and at present. Brubaker (1996: 21), speaking of the sudden and pervasive 'nationalisation' of public and private life, stressed that 'we know well from a variety of appal-

⁴² Later on, this peculiar affinity also manifested itself as an attempt by many Latvian politicians to present the mass deportations of 1941 and 1949 as the 'Holocaust of the Latvian people'.

⁴³ 'Latvijas iedzīvotāji neatbalsta īpašuma atdošanu kopienām', 13 August 2012, available at: http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/432220-iedzivotaji_neatbalsta_ipasuma_atdosanu_kopienam.

ling testimony *that* this has happened; but we know too little about *how* it happened'. He claimed that, in order to understand 'the processual dynamics of nationalism', we need an eventful perspective, examining contingent events and their transformative consequences (Brubaker 1996: 21). The interplay among different minorities within the same state, just as the role of international organisations, is an intrinsic part of this eventful perspective, and without taking both of them account, much remains obscured in the dynamics of nationalism.

Let us consider the example of Latvian-Jewish relations in interwar Latvia. If examined within the original triadic nexus (the nationalising state – the minority – the kin-state), the steady deterioration of this relationship over the course of interwar years remains a puzzle. After all, as mentioned above, the Jews, as the only other formerly oppressed ethnic group, shared a special bond with the Latvians. There was no strong anti-Semitic tradition in interwar Latvia and no kin-state in the picture. In short, nothing that would explain the continual escalation in the Latvians' hostility towards the Jews.

But if we account for the important role that the Jews played in the minority faction of the parliament, for their visibility at international forums, the League of Nations and the Nationalities Congress alike, and for their persistent affiliation, both cultural and political, with other Latvian minorities – then one starts at least to comprehend the Latvians' reaction. Instead of gratefully – and quietly – enjoying the freedoms that had been already bestowed upon them, the Jews, encouraged by international covenants, took their democratic rights and responsibilities at face value. Together with the sworn enemies of the Latvians, the Baltic Germans, the Jews were at the forefront of minority politics in Latvia, working actively both at the parliamentary and the municipal level (both Laserson and Nurock were known as formidable opponents in the *Saeima*), pursuing cultural autonomy and fighting for the amendments to the Citizenship Law of 1919, which they considered unjust (the other minorities rallied behind them). For ethnic Latvians, the Jews were not so much a 'thorn in the side' by themselves, but rather as a catalyst for mobilisation of other, politically less proactive minorities (the Russians, the Poles, and the Belarussians all fall into this category). Further on, while the Latvians did not pursue an assimilationist policy towards the Jews at the time and would have been perfectly content with them practicing their own culture, the Jews' stubborn preference for the Russian and German cultures was perceived as disloyalty, and, coupled with joint political activities, as an indication of support not just for these ethnic groups,

but also for their aggressive kin-states. To summarise, the Jews as a single ethnic unit presented no danger to the nationalist project, but, through their affiliation with other ethnic minorities present, and especially by assuming political leadership, along with the Baltic Germans, within the minorities' bloc, they were perceived to pose a threat – a threat to which the state responded by increasingly nationalising policies. Without examining the relational interplay among the minorities, this remains hidden.

Can this relational interplay among different minorities within the same state be accommodated, to use Brubaker's own phraseology, as *internal to* and *constitutive of* the minority dimension of the original triadic nexus, without disaggregating it into a separate unit? The answer depends on whether we regard the 'players' in the model as *entities* or *unitary actors* (an interpretation that Brubaker (1995) warned against, but which nevertheless can be often encountered), or strictly as *relational fields* as defined by Bourdieu. Fields do not lend themselves easily to graphic representation (Bourdieu's own complex information-laden diagrams attest to that); taking into account shifting perceptions and competing stances described by Brubaker makes the graphic representation of the model even more difficult, as observed by Pettai (2007). Perhaps, in order to avoid overloading the model, a compromise can be reached: within the conceptual framework, for additional clarity, the fifth dimension can be treated as a separate relational field; whereas in the analytical model and in its graphic representation it can be accommodated as follows: for multiethnic states, the nexus should be composed of not the (by now traditional) 'nationalising state – national minority – external homeland – international organisations', but rather 'nationalising state – national *minorities* – external *homelands* – international organisations'. Regardless of how it is represented in the model, accounting for the additional relational field of minorities interplay will amplify the explanatory power of the nexus.

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